

THE CARE OF THE FEET

By MRS. JEANETTE ORR

Graduate of the Colorado Training School for Nurses, Denver

SINCE I have been taking the JOURNAL and reading the excellent articles which have been contributed by our doctors and nurses, I have not noticed anything in regard to the care of the nurses' feet. Where is the nurse who can say she is not and has never been troubled with some one or more of the various troubles which afflict the feet? Can anyone tell of anything which practically makes one sick all over like painful feet? It is next to an impossibility for one thus afflicted to be at her best, though she may try ever so hard, and no one, not even the doctor, can guess the cause for her seeming stupidity at times—when the fact is her poor brain is simply tortured with pain from her feet, making it impossible for her to think and act quickly.

First of all, the most important and absolute necessity, in the care of the feet, is this, we must bottle our pride, and say, "Here goes for a comfortable instead of a pretty pair of shoes." The broad toe which admits of perfect freedom of the toes, the low flat heel, thick cushion sole, long enough so that the toes do not come in contact with the toe of the shoe, are needed, for it is a well-known fact, that tight, short shoes and high heels are responsible for many of the ailments of the feet.

After you have worn these common-sense shoes for a month, just put on a pair with tight-pointed toes and high heels and walk in them for an hour. What a relief to get into the others!

For those who have tender inflamed feet, there is nothing which will give such relief and cure, as the treatment used by the soldiers after a hard day's tramp when the feet have reached this condition. Place in a vessel about two gallons of cold water, add to this a large cup of ordinary salt, stir till dissolved, put the feet into this and let them remain for twenty minutes at least. Dry the feet thoroughly. Do this every night. In the morning put on clean hose. You will be surprised at the result at the end of one week's treatment.

For soft corns, which come between the toes, before dressing the feet in the morning, dust boracic acid between these members and place a thin layer of absorbent cotton over the corn. Repeat each morning.

For the hard corns, take a piece of fine sandpaper and rub them till all the hardness disappears, if the small hard center,—commonly known as the eye of the corn—cannot be reached in this manner, use

a knife for its removal, being careful not to make the toe bleed, grease well with vaseline night and morning, thus keeping it soft till the healthy skin has a chance to take the place of the hard callous. Each time the feet are bathed, special care must be given to the places where the corns appear, apply plenty of soap and water and brush thoroughly with a good brush—this stimulates circulation and keeps the hard callous from forming. Rinse the feet in cool water and dry thoroughly, again applying vaseline to the corn. Bunions may be treated in this way.

Another extremely painful affection of the feet is chilblain; the cure of which I am about to tell is absolute. It has cured cases where doctors have urged an operation.

First, elevate the foot and massage upward the afflicted part for about five minutes, then place the foot in water as hot as can be borne, keep adding hot water for at least fifteen minutes, remove from the hot bath and plunge the foot in very cold water letting it remain for fifteen minutes. Remove from the cold bath and dry, being careful to dry well between the toes, take a piece of soft muslin and put once around the toe and slightly overlap, being careful to keep out any wrinkles in the cloth, then take a piece of adhesive strap about three-eights of an inch wide, begin at the extreme end of the toe and strap it round and round snugly the full length of the toe but not tight enough to impede circulation, do this at night and keep the strapping on several days. Repeat if necessary. Usually two or three treatments of this kind will cure a bad case of chilblains. The wrapping of the soft muslin must not be omitted as this protects the inflamed delicate skin from the drawing and somewhat irritating effect of the adhesive. The adhesive must be wound smoothly, cutting out with the scissors little V shapes rather than overlapping, to fit the toe, otherwise the pressure of the shoe on these uneven places may be painful.

The ingrowing nail usually takes care of itself after the foot has been fitted with a common-sense shoe, but to help them start right, we might suggest this treatment. The large toe is the one which suffers most. After the feet have been carefully washed, comes the manicuring of the nails. Never under any circumstances should the nails be cut down at the corners, as we cut our finger nails, but trimmed squarely across, letting the corners set well out on the toes. If at first they are not inclined to do so, take a blunt flat instrument and gently raise them and place a small pledge of cotton under them; this will cause them to grow upward and outward instead of inward.

Let us not wait and keep putting off the wearing of comfortable

shoes, for a nurse cannot do justice to herself, her doctor, or her patient when she travels on a pair of painful feet.

Speaking of shoes reminds me of an incident. We all know how patients notice everything about a nurse, and how they have the feeling that the nurse knows all things; a patient speaking to me in regard to a nurse whom she had recently discharged said: "Imagine her, a trained nurse, one of a class of women who are always looked upon as the most sensible, wearing French heels and beaded toe slippers and positively limping with pain. Why it made me nervous, I could n't endure it."

So there is another reason why nurses should use better judgment about shoes and the general care of the feet.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

Born May, 1820 *

Received Order of Merit, December 5, 1907

On far Crimean fields the war was waged,
Drenching with human blood the country fair;
Brave as the beasts, like beasts the armies raged—
The British Lion and the Russian Bear.

But through the fire and carnage of the strife,
Beside the soldier's cot—the soldier's grave—
To succor pain and rescue mortal life
A woman moved, whose mission was to save.

* * * * *

Dead now the rulers of those sovereign States,
Dead now the leaders of those warring bands;
But still in honored age the woman waits,
Reaping the harvest rising to her hands.

In every Christian land her name is blessed,
Her work shall live when she has laid it down.
We, each, who serve the sick and the distressed
Increase the eternal glory of her crown.

R. B. SHERMAN.

*[We have departed from our custom of putting verses in the Christmas number only, to insert these in the month when Miss Nightingale's birthday comes. Ed.]